

FILIPNO AMERICAN CULTURE AND TRADITIONS:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Social Work

By
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May 2014

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the many blessings and the opportunity and education to help those who are in need. I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family for supporting me throughout graduate school: To my parents, Abe and Remy Bautista, for all their unconditional love, support, motivation and drive for success; to my sister Nicolette and her husband Kaipō, thank you for always believing and challenging me to be my best; to my Uncles, Aunties and cousins, thank you for words of encouragement and support.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my close friends and special individuals who have supported me. I want to extend my deepest thanks and gratitude for your inspirational words, being there as great listeners, making me laugh and putting a smile on my face. Also much appreciation goes out to close friends who took the time to hear and brainstorm ideas with me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my thesis chair, Dr. Shradha Tibrewal; and my reader and field liaison, Paul Sivak; thank you for your support, patience and knowledge. Thank you for the motivation and encouragement in completing my thesis and the graduate program. I also would like to acknowledge New Dimensions Foster Family Agency and Stanislaus County Human Services Agency – Child Welfare AB 12/Permanent Placement unit, for the knowledge and experience in learning how to work for and with the foster youth population. To my field instructors, thank you for mentoring my field placement and allowing me to grow and gain the knowledge to be a well-rounded social worker. Additionally, I would like to thank the participants of my study for sharing their experiences and stories of their lives. Lastly, I would also like to thank my peers in the program for your support, experiences and sharing of vast knowledge, as well as the good memories and many moments of laughter.

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ABSTRACT

Filipino Americans are the second largest immigrant population in the United States, yet there is very limited literature on their culture and development. This study explored the definition of culture and the process of cultural transmissions among Filipino American generations. The study also examined the specific cultural traditions and practices that are valued and have remained intact in the Filipino American culture. A qualitative research design was used to conduct in-depth interviews with ten Filipino American second-generation and older participants. A major finding showed that participants defined culture as a combination of components relating to individuals' ethnic and familial ancestry, where family was a major aspect describing how traditions and or practices were defined, interpreted and passed on among generations. The findings also displayed what are the most valued traditions and or practices among the Filipino American population. Respect, language and the significance of the family emerged as traditions and or values that are treasured and which participants hoped will be continued on by future generations. The findings of this study suggest the need for a more in-depth understanding of how language and family dynamics impact Filipino American culture. Social workers also need to be educated on Filipino American traditions and or practices in order to embrace being culturally competent and find more accommodating ways to engage Filipino American clients. An abstract must be submitted as part of the thesis.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Filipino Americans are the second largest Asian population in the United States, but there is very little literary and statistical information known about their lifestyle and progress (David, 2010). Over the past four hundred years, there have been four major immigration patterns or “waves” of Philippine immigration to the United States (Nadal, 2011). The first wave came during the sixteenth century during the ship-trading era. The second wave began four centuries later in the early 1900’s by the Pensionados, who were U.S-sponsored college students. The next two waves of immigration consisted of agriculture laborers between 1910–1940; then, in 1965, business-health professionals began to immigrate when the Immigration Act increased the number of immigrants allowed into the United States.

Unlike other Asian nations, the Philippines were influenced by several other countries and cultures due to Spanish and American colonization, Japanese occupation during World War II, and trade from China, the Pacific Islands, Portugal, and Australia (Nadal, 2011). Filipino and Filipino American culture has been established through the concept of colonial mentality, where a form of internalized oppression characterized by preferring anything American and rejecting anything Filipino can be observed (David, 2010). Filipino Americans have been racially grouped into many communities due to the history of colonial rule by Spain and the

United States (Nadal, 2004). Colonialism has affected many countries but more so in the Philippines, where a change in language and religion was enforced by both Spain and the United States, two very different countries, culturally and socially (Choi & Thomas, 2009). Colonialism involves a complex set of ideological, emotional, physical and political processes that take place when an ethnic group has their country taken over by outsiders and they are forced to learn a culture and ideals not native to them (Morris, 2012). As a result of such influence, Filipino Americans are stereotyped and are seen as a “model minority” being successfully assimilated by speaking English, maintaining economic stability, and through participation in higher education (Wolf, 1997).

During the second wave of immigration, Filipino immigrants were also known as “little brown brothers,” where they aided the U.S in agriculture and militant labor (Nadal, 2011). Filipinos were the first Asian-U.S nationals considered to be temporary legal residents. However, “Filipinos did not face the same legal restrictions on immigration as did other groups from Asia and Europe until the 1930s”, when legislation limited Filipino immigration (Austin & Ling, 2010, p.285). The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, also known as the Philippine Independence Act, enforced limited immigration into the U.S and began a ten-year transitional independence plan for the Philippines. Subsequently, due to this act, Filipinos were discriminated against by other immigrant groups, as well as by American-born citizens, for not fitting into either group. Most discrimination occurred because Filipinos were seen as competition for jobs, inter-racial socializing, educational opportunities and marriage.

Filipinos were originally allowed to immigrate into the U.S as alternative labor where most of the time they “were treated no better, and sometimes worse, than other ethnic minorities” because of their evolving social economic status and the lack of known information about them (Austin & Ling, 2010, p.260). Most laborers were men; Filipino men were often viewed as nomadic and mysterious because they lived according to the crop calendar and often did not have any permanent residence. In the National media, Filipino men were seen as deviants as a result of their lack of permanency, single status, lack of family, values and traveler mentality (Nadal, 2011). As a result, Filipino culture was stereotyped, where they were often described as primitive and heathenish, which often resulted in difficulties with other minority groups.

The consequence of such conflict was that anti- Filipino movements were established, which in turn led to Filipino communities being attacked emotionally and physically by other minorities and U.S-born citizens (Nadal, 2011). Hotels, restaurants, and grocery stores often would refuse service and some would hang storefront signs stating “No Filipinos Allowed” (Nadal, 2011). The first recorded large physical confrontation was on October 24, 1929 when a Filipino labor camp in Exeter, CA was attacked after multiple confrontations between Caucasian and Filipino farmworkers (Austin & Ling, 2010). The most well-known attack was January 29, 1930 on the Filipino Federation of America building in Stockton, CA, where a dynamite bomb exploded and destroyed the porch and the structure of the building (Morris, 2012).

Anti-Filipino sentiment continued over time throughout U.S history. Many Filipinos and Filipino Americans were discriminated against, often for their inability to be classified into a specific ethnic population. In World War II, many Filipino and Filipino Americans called *Veteranos* enlisted in the U.S armed forces as an opportunity to show their American loyalty and in hopes of gaining citizenship (Austin & Ling, 2010). Many of the *Veteranos* participated in the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) that were commanded by General Douglas MacArthur. The unit consisted of a combination of U.S and Philippine armed forces, and contained elements of the Philippines Commonwealth Army, Guerilla Units, New Philippine Scouts and other specialized forces. One of the most famous battles was the Battle of Bataan where the Japanese took possession of the Philippines and made General MacArthur retreat to Australia. As a result of this battle 75,000 soldiers became Prisoners of War: about 12,000 Americans and 63,000 Filipinos. After losing the battle, the Bataan Death March started where the Japanese made the infantry march for about sixty-five miles north toward Camp O'Donnell in Tarlac Province (Kahlil, 2008). Overall, there were over 250,000 Filipinos inducted and fighting on behalf of the United States Armed Forces during World War II. Many died and suffered dearly as a result of aiding the U.S in their need for manpower (Austin & Ling, 2010).

Because of their service, the *Veteranos* were allowed to become U.S citizens by an amendment to the Nationality Act of 1940 on March 27th 1942 (Austin & Ling, 2010). Two years later, on June 22, 1944, the GI Bill of Rights was initiated which

allowed full benefits to those who had served in the war regardless of race, color or nationality -- except the Filipinos. This unfair bill was followed by more discrimination against Filipinos, including the Recession Act of 1946 where any pension that was issued to them was revoked. This act initiated by President Harry Truman on February 18, 1946 denied Filipino veterans the right to be identified as American veterans (Austin & Ling, 2010). Specifically, it stated that Filipinos would not receive any pensions or have any recognition for having served in World War II (Kahlil, 2008). Consequently, the act allotted the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines \$200,000,000 for their service, which would mean about eight hundred dollars per person. This highly controversial act remained law and inspired the creation of many Filipino community political groups, which attempted to create activism and educational awareness in response to this unfair act. Their efforts were only recently addressed by President Obama passing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009(Kahlil, 2008).

Today, Filipino Americans are often considered the forgotten minority, and are commonly labeled and classified into various groups. For example, in the U.S Department of Education, Filipinos are grouped in with Pacific Islanders, and in the Census as Asian Americans (Nadal, 2011). According to the 2000 U.S Census Bureau, in the United States, there are 1.37 million Filipino born immigrants, over 2 million documented Filipino Americans, and a possible 1 million undocumented Filipino or Filipino Americans (Nadal, 2011). With such a large population, many would believe that Filipinos and Filipino Americans would have a large community

and political influence; however, Filipinos are often labeled as the “forgotten Asian Americans,” where they are often clustered with other Asian Pacific Island minorities.

Identities of Filipino Americans have evolved like many immigrant cultures that have transitioned into the United States. Since there were so many waves of Filipino immigration, patterns of identity for Filipino Americans cannot be easily recognized. According to Wolf’s research on assimilation, “children of immigrants experience some familial conflict, as their parents attempt to impose their values in new social contexts” (Wolf, 1997, pg. 458). Therefore, experiences amongst immigrants vary according to the cultural influence of their family. Thus, identities differ amongst generations of Filipino Americans and vary in accordance to an individual’s background and cultural practices in addition to when they or their family immigrated into the United States (Nadal, 2004). Filipino American cultural practices have altered over time, where ideals that have been passed down are consistently changing as society and American culture progresses. Consequently, Filipino Americans are a unique population with various acculturation and assimilation practices that have only begun to expand due to the different generational influences on cultural perspectives (Wolf, 1997). Cultural practices differ, where influences can stem from experiences from familial or community based characteristics such as education and socioeconomic status. Hence, Filipinos have had a very different journey in becoming part of the United States melting pot. Being a

unique immigrant ethnic group, Filipinos in U.S have faced many difficulties that no other cultural or ethnic minority groups have (Nadal, 2012).

Exploration into Filipino American culture within the United States is very minimal. Filipinos are among the first Asians to immigrate to the United States (Alban, 2004). They are also the second largest immigrant population, second only to Mexican Americans. The histories of Filipino immigrants and Filipino Americans reveal unique sociocultural practices and traditions influenced by multifaceted factors while living in the United States (Nadal, 2011). Research has found that American values have an enormous impact on Filipino American families. American values emphasize independence within the family unit, while Filipino American values do the same but only as a familial unit (Cimmarusti, 1996). Subsequent multicultural research has found that immigrant groups have expressed concern for their children becoming overly Americanized, where they lose respect for their culture and are exposed to violence, sex, drugs and gangs (Wolf, 1997).

The purpose of this study is to explore the transmission of cultural practices between generations within the Filipino American culture. In the Philippines, there are 65 distinct ethnic groups and cultural minorities. As a result, culture amongst Filipino Americans is very diverse and unique. For example, some Filipinos are more apt to utilize home remedies, prayer, or faith healing due to the belief that illness or misfortunes are caused by curses, evil persons, or the will of God (Alban, 2004). Filipinos are 80% Catholic and 10% non-Catholic Christian, which is one of the results of the colonial influence (Nadal, 2004). Subsequently, specific cultural

perspectives and practices vary according to each individual's culture as it was passed down to them or observed. According to a study by Gong, Gage & Tacata (2003), Filipino Americans have rarely even heard of mental health. As a result, many Filipino Americans in need use the lay system such as family, extended family or friends to assist with their needs. The idea of seeking help outside the family unit is seen as a stigma (Gong, Gage & Tacata, 2003). Stigma in the Filipino American culture is defined by various studies concerning the utilization of outside help from the familial or fictive kinship communities (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994).

Statement of Purpose

This study attempted to identify the key ways through which cultural practices are passed down to the future generations. It examined what practices are used and how life in the U.S has affected the cultural practices and traditions of the Filipino population through generations. Lastly, this study examined what practices have remained intact in the Filipino American culture and how a balance of cultural praxis is established. For the purpose of this study, *cultural praxis* is defined as the traditions, lifestyles and practices in daily life (Peterson & Anand, 2004). Specifically, this study examined how these practices and traditions are shared with future generations. Within this study, generational transmission is defined as the ways and means through which cultural practices have transferred between Filipino or Filipino American elders to the younger generations. The major questions that guided this study are 1) What is the definition of culture to Filipino Americans? 2) What traditions and or practices in the Filipino American culture do the older

generations feel are important to pass down to the newer generations? 3) How are traditions and or practices passed down between generations? 4) How have such practices and traditions made an impact on their experience of living in the United States as Filipino Americans?

Significance of the Study

This research study is relevant to the social work profession because it can provide knowledge for working with the Filipino American populations. As stated above, Filipino Americans are a unique population having very different assimilation and acculturation experiences, where some Filipino American communities received more or less discrimination from dominant and subordinate groups. Overall, the study will focus and narrow the view on how culture and traditions are kept and passed along that can be influential in working with the Filipino community. It will identify cultural practices that can help and hinder the usages of community services and resources. The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific islanders (WHIAPI) was created in October 2009 to identify the needs of this community while increasing access to federally funded programs. Through this initiative, research has found that “Filipino youth have one of the highest high school dropout rates and one of the highest rates of teen suicide ideation and attempts” (Nadal, 2004, p.47). This study’s findings can help better understand the cultural perspectives and it can be used to see if there is any correlation to the statistics found with regard to such issues as youth dropout and suicide. Additionally, it will allow data to be obtained on how Filipino Americans living in the United States have maintained their culture and how

these cultural practices can be integrated or better understood to provide more culturally sensitive services to this population.

Definition of Key Terms

In the Philippines there are over one hundred and twenty different languages and dialects each unique to their region of the Philippines. Today, the two official languages of the Philippines are English and Tagalog. Historically, the national language has changed three times alternating between English, Spanish and Tagalog due to the colonial influence of Spain and United States. Thus, for the purposes of this study, Filipinos are defined as people who emigrated from the Philippines, and Filipino Americans are individuals of Filipino decent who are born and reside in the United States (Tuason, Taylor, Rollings, Harris, & Martin 2007).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review examines research on culture: observing culture, cultural transmissions, traditions, and practices within the Filipino and Filipino American culture. This chapter will explore various definitions of culture and identify the components of its practices and traditions. It will pinpoint the major cultural traditions and practices through scholarly articles and literature, and observe how culture can be transmitted and passed on among generations within the Filipino American population. With little research having been done about the Filipino American communities and populations, this chapter will focus on exploring Filipino American culture in the United States and how it is passed down to future generations. Additionally, this review of literature will gain perspective on cultural transmissions by exploring parallel literature on other ethnic cultural traditions and practices and how they are passed down to future generations.

Definitions of Culture

Culture has a vast variety of definitions where individuals can interpret it through their own biases and opinions. A general definition of culture describes it as “shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people” (Schriver, 2011, p. 22). Culture is fluid and it is created daily; it can range from a small task such as how one ties their shoes to how one cooks a particular

dish (Nadal, 2011). It is created through an individual or group of people educating others about processes and procedures as to how an action or task is completed (Peterson & Anand, 2004). In other research, culture is defined as “a series of conditions for transformation and construction” where new culture is created and reinvented (Dekker, 2001, p.79). With the many interpretations of culture, there are many theories surrounding the idea of how culture is developed and passed down to future generations (Dekker, 2001). According to Dekker (2001), culture is always being rebuilt and restructured because it is passed on from one generation to the next, where modifications are made as they are interpreted and handed on. Over time, culture has changed slowly, where it adapts according to those who are learning and being part of the culture. Additionally, Dekker (2001, p.87) also states that “Culture is the historically and culturally limited result of human activities, present in a system of symbols, norms, values, knowledge and artefacts which could be (partly) transmitted to the next generation”, where he believes that only portions of culture are passed on among generations.

In general, culture has drastically expanded where new innovations, ideas, and products have taken over society. According to Peterson and Anand (2004), there are six facets that make up culture in society: technology, law and regulation, industry structure, organization structure, occupational career, and market. These facets work individually and together in forming distinctive categories which individuals and groups utilize to conduct daily functions of everyday life. It produces culture by “focusing on system structures through the way each system is created, distributed,

evaluated, taught and preserved” (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p. 311). From each of these structures, culture is refurbished and adapted according to what suits the individual, group of people or environment. As a result, culture has many meanings, characteristics, connotations, and significances, all of which work collaboratively, creating a “culture” that fits different individuals or group of people.

Cultural Transmissions among Generations

There are many theories of how culture is passed among generations, where influences vary from child-rearing and to education. *Education learning*, a term defined by Dekker (2001), is a process of learning or gaining knowledge through a method of being taught or instructed; it is a process of interaction that takes place in educational settings such as the in the home or school (Dekker, 2001). This study suggests that through education, transmission of culture occurs. Culture is passed by many means and in many ways, but the most common term used is *cultural transmission*. Like culture, cultural transmission has many definitions; for example, one theory explains it as the learning process and relationships of how culture is observed and learned (Dekker, 2001). This theory proposes through observation, an educational development occurs by information being reviewed and analyzed.

Another way culture is transmitted among generations is through educational institutions, where culture is primarily taught through educational means, and other ways such as the school systems and in home teachings. This theory observes relationships between individuals and their educators as reciprocal and unpredictable (Dekker, 2001). Among those relationships, the role of the teacher and student are

interchangeable, where those within the relationship are able to regulate the knowledge being retained and shared. In another theory, philosopher Immanuel Kant similarly states that education is a large part of culture, which places limitations on individuals, where by doing so free thinking is promoted, and this creates a new knowledge and culture. Kant proposes that, by controlling what specific information is taught, individual thinking is promoted out of mindfulness (Dekker, 2001). Kant's theory, also known as the Kantian paradox, emphasizes the influence and impact of those individuals who teach and are taught, by monitoring the limitations and what is being learned. Consequently, it subconsciously stimulates opposing thoughts and or questions by creating boundaries for the knowledge being obtained or learned.

In further research focused on education within culture, Morin (2013) believes that a key way culture is passed down is through communication in education. Communication is unique in that it has multiple facets for how it can be used and conveyed verbally or through gestures. Morin's theory on transmission of culture explains that there are three ways to communicate culture: by observation, material scaffolding, and individual practice (2013). Through observation and individual practice, individuals can develop their own culture that fit to their environment. Material scaffolding, also known as material building, allows individuals to create their own style of traditions and or practices, according to their environment. Additionally, through such traditions and or practices, their use of practice and observation tests their successes and failures, which ultimately develops one's culture (Morin, 2013). All of these communication styles emphasize social learning,

implying that one's concept of culture is altered by one's social environments and interaction. Overall, communication, regardless of how it is conveyed, is a crucial part of cultural transmission, where it is the foundation of how culture is created and passed on (Morin, 2013).

Other research on cultural transmission emphasizes the importance and impact of child-rearing practices and ethnic traditions and values. According to a qualitative study on cultural transmission among American Indian families, culture is primarily transmitted through the family. Family aids in shaping and guiding individuals by finding their individual and group identities through the influence of family members (Cheshire, 2001). Moreover, similar to Morin's belief about communication, socialization is also a major component of cultural transmission, which is a comprehensive way of passing culture to each individual by exposure to various diversities of individuals and groups. Cheshire's study, using in-depth interviews, concluded that "socialization is created by cultural knowledge of adult responsibilities that are adequate for essential competencies' and functioning" (Cheshire, 2001, p.1528). Additionally, from the interviews, it was found that ethnicity plays a major role in how cultural transmission is carried out, where different communication styles and traditions shape outcomes of a culture. Overall, the study concluded that there are eight major ways in which culture is passed on within a familial unit: listening, telling, watching or observing, showing, exposure, involvement and participation (Cheshire, 2001). Furthermore, in this study, it was also found that American Indian families used each of these methods subconsciously because such practices are deeply

ingrained. Chesire concludes that, overall, culture is transferred through communication and socialization, where practices, traditions, and values are transferred between generations permitting individual and group growth to create identity (Cheshire, 2001).

Like Cheshire, Wisscott and Kopera-Frye (2001) theorized that culture is primarily passed on through the family but specifically by grandparents. According to their study on the sharing of culture between grandparents and their grandchildren, it was concluded, through in-depth interviews, that “the culture keeper role is an important aspect for many grandparents” (Kopera-Frye, 2000, p. 210). This study implies that most grandparents are retired or are part-time caregivers to their grandchildren, where they have opportunities to establish relationships that are not inclined to the same responsibilities as the parents (Kopera-Frye, 2000). This study also found that the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren revolve around five activities that share family culture including: sharing stories from childhood, looking at family photos, teaching family customs or traditions, talking about cultural heritage, and eating foods from their cultural heritage (Kopera-Frye, 2000).

In another study on the role of grandparents in Filipino American families, it was discovered, through focus groups, that grandparents are revered for their knowledge and efforts in caregiving for the family (Kataoka-Yashiro, Ceria & Yoder, 2004). It was found that Filipino American families depend on nuclear and extended family members such as grandparents in the United States. Grandparents are often

given the roles of aiding in maintaining the household since most often they are unemployed and or retired (Kataoka-Yashiro, Ceria & Yoder, 2004). Additionally, in the study, a barrier was found concerning culture. A “cultural gap between the grandparents and children that at times resulted in intergenerational conflicts” was discovered through the study’s in-depth interviews (Kataoka-Yashiro, Ceria & Yoder, 2004, p.110). This barrier was found to be faced more by older grandchildren who were becoming independent where they no longer relied on the care of the grandparents. Thus, the study concluded that within Filipino American families, as grandchildren become more independent with age, the role of grandparents as caregivers decreases.

Filipino and Filipino American Culture

Many cultural differences and similarities between the United States and Philippines have created the Filipino American sociocultural praxis. This is defined as the traditions and or practices that combine to make up daily life routines. According to Cimmarusti (1996), family is the primary characteristic in Filipino and Filipino American cultures. Important features surrounding family define the traditions and or practices along with cultural values and expectations. This praxis is established through daily acts and home life, with major influences coming from within familial dynamics.

Presently, “Filipino culture can be defined as a hybrid of indigenous and colonial values, beliefs, customs and traditions” (Nadal, 2011, p. 36). Furthermore, Filipino culture focuses on the family unit, where one act of a family member affects

all members of the family (Agbayiani-Siewert, 1994). Filipino American practices are highly influenced by Filipino family values brought back from the Philippines. These values focus on and are based on three major Filipino cultural traits: *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *pakikisama* (harmony) and *tsismis* (gossip). The concept of *utang na loob* is a reciprocal obligation, often in the form of an act of kindness (Cimmarusti, 1996). *Pakikisama* is togetherness or harmony where people display equal respect and mindfulness towards family members (Cimmarusti, 1996). Lastly is the value of gossip, known as *tismis*, where communication is maintained indirectly by allowing family members or others to communicate for one another (Cimmarusti, 1996). These three values are important to maintain in order to prevent stigma or shame, *hiya*; doing so would promote and emphasize the *pakikisama* (harmony) and values of the family unit (Agbayiani-Siewert, 1994).

In addition to the family being an important part of the Filipino culture, so is the concept of respect. Respect is highly regarded especially for the elders within the family or general community (Nadal, 2011). The term “elder” does not only apply to grandparents, but to cousins or individuals who are considered family and are older in age. Elders, regardless of how much older an individual is than another, are identified as individuals who have enough experience and knowledge to help influence decision-making (Nadal, 2011). Filipinos are encouraged to spend time with their elders in order to seek advice or observe and model their successes. Overall, within the Filipino culture, respect is necessary to give to everyone to promote *pakikisama* (harmony), regardless of the gender, age, or ethnicity of an individual or group.

Subsequently, in exploring the Filipino culture, it is evident that Spain's and the United State's colonization of the Philippines had considerable impact (Mulder, 2013). The influences of these countries affected Filipino culture by creating a new culture in Philippines that has integrated Spanish and American traditions and practices. Throughout the Philippines, influences can be seen in history and today, for example, the American flag on their currency and many of their streets and town squares being named after American World War II heroes and Spanish diplomats (Mulder, 2013). Another large effect of colonization in the Philippines is language, where Spanish was one of the national languages even after Spain's withdrawal in 1898. Presently, English is the second national language of the Philippines and is taught in their public school system mimicking the standards of grammar and comprehension of the United States (Nadal, 2011). The influence and presence of English in the Philippines can be seen as a permanent effect of the United States colonization. Consequently, English is now part of the Filipino and Filipino American culture that has created a standard across the nation, where "speaking English meant one is civilized or educated" (Nadal, 2011, pg.95). Mulder's study also concluded that after the Philippines gained independence from Spain and the United States after World War II, they lost their sense of nationalism and identity, and have now created a new identity based on those who defeated them (Mulder, 2013). This new Filipino culture that was created has since influenced the creation and evolution of the Filipino American culture in the United States.

The American influence on Filipino American culture varies according to each individual or familial acculturation and assimilation (Choi & Thomas, 2009). This process of adopting social patterns of another ethnic group is unique to each individual where numerous factors such as age, generation, historical, and non-historical demographics within the U.S and in the Philippines affect each individual (Nadal, 2011). Filipino American sociocultural traditions and practices are distinct, and barriers are created from both Filipino and American cultural differences, within the changing Filipino American society and culture (Agbayiani-Siewert, 1997)

Perceptions of Filipino Americans as Asian Americans

Filipino Americans are most often identified as other Asian American ethnicities or often as Latinos. As a result of such misidentification, Filipinos can exhibit multiple experiences of racial discrimination, according to a study by Nadal (2004). Filipino Americans have identified themselves as Asian American in order to be part of a larger community. In today's society many Filipino Americans are indifferent to identifying themselves as Asian American due to the large differences that come from being a Filipino American (Ocampo, 2013). The three main differences between Asian Americans and Filipino Americans are that Filipino Americans have a strong Catholic influence, English is the dominant language spoken, and they believe in a gender-neutral society (Nadal, 2004). In research exploring Asian Americans, Ocampo (2013) found that Filipino Americans did not identify with Asian Americans in terms of their ethnicity, but rather with Latino and Black populations. This study concluded through in-depth interviews that Filipino

Americans identify more with Latino and Black families because these groups place more value on family rather than on education (Ocampo, 2013). Research states that this is due to influences from Spanish colonization where ideals of pride and self-love swayed Filipino individuals to prefer close, interpersonal, warm relationships (Nadal, 2011).

Observations of Being Filipino American

In other historical research observing Filipino American identity, a theory was developed that Filipino Americans are “bicultural, defined as the ability for a member of two cultural groups to maintain beliefs, values, and behaviors of both groups” (Nadal, 2011, p.53). Subsequently, a qualitative study in Chicago, one of the largest Filipino American populated areas, found 80% of their respondents indicated that they would seek help provided by the Filipino American community or by clinicians sensitive to Filipino culture (Cimmarusti, 1996). Other studies have concluded that many clinical physicians and social workers who work within Filipino American communities or any other ethnic minority communities need to make themselves culturally competent when working with diverse populations. It is suggested that professionals need to observe distinctive behaviors, such as when families do not carry out typical American tasks; this can provide clues to what social services are needed and how they can be implemented (Choi & Thomas, 2009). According to Nadal, Escobar, Prado, David, and Haynes (2012), many counselors believe that all Asian Americans including Filipino Americans are the same, and they fail to recognize different experiences and characteristics such as religion, gender, sexual

orientation, and socioeconomic and immigrant status. Many Filipino Americans may look Asian American; however, their views on culture and traditions are not the same, insofar as influences derive mostly from Spain and the United States

Summary

The information presented above provides a brief look into studies defining and identifying culture within the Filipino American population. It observes direct and parallel research that focuses on classifying how and what traditions and or practices are passed among generations. There is limited research surrounding Filipino Americans, as well as on how culture is passed. Therefore, more detailed exploration needs to be conducted to better recognize the importance and impact of culture. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to define culture and observe the transmission of cultural traditions and or practices between generations within the Filipino American Culture.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The lack of study on Filipino American culture in the United States is surprising considering that Filipinos have been immigrating to the U.S. since the early sixteenth century. This study observed how cultural practices have been transferred across generations among second-generation Filipino Americans living within the United States. Additionally, it observed the effects of cultural transmissions on Filipino American lifestyles. The study, overall, established a foundation for exploration into Filipino American culture in the United States and created a basis for future studies on the Filipino American population.

The questions that guided this study were, 1. What is the definition of culture to second generation and beyond Filipino Americans? 2. What traditions and or practices in the Filipino American culture do older generations feel are more important to pass down to new and future generations? 3. How are traditions and or practices passed down between generations? 4. How have these traditions and practices changed their experience living in the United States?

Research Design

In order to study the Filipino American cultural perspective, a qualitative design was chosen as the method because it used research to gain an in-depth understanding of a topic. According to Rubin and Babbie (2011), qualitative research

focuses on obtaining data that try to find a better understanding of how and why things occur within a theory or concept. By choosing a qualitative research design, data were very detailed and provided a more in-depth understanding of culture and cultural practices and traditions among the Filipino Americans in the U.S. The data collected focused on content and not on numerical observations (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). This method suited the study since there is limited literature and little known information about Filipino American cultural perspective. The study used exploratory methods where in-depth information was gathered to lay the groundwork for future exploratory and descriptive studies.

Sampling

A non-probability purposive sampling plan was utilized in the study to recruit participants. Therefore, the sampling for this study was non-random. Non-probability purposive sampling is selective sampling where the researcher defines specific criteria for the sample driven by the purpose of the research (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). In this study, potential participants met the following criteria: 1) they identified themselves as Filipino American; 2) they were at least second generation; 3) they were at least thirty years old ; and 4) they had resided in the United States for at least ten years. In the criteria, the term *second generation* was defined as a person having at least one parent who is first generation (a person who has emigrated from another country into the U.S.). The criteria for participants were created in order to ensure that the study gathered data that correlate directly with the research questions.

Specifically, the criteria allowed the researcher to gather participants who have had a longer experience being Filipino American living in the U.S.

According to Nadal (2011), California has one of the largest populations of Filipino Americans in the U.S., thus, attaining sufficient numbers of participants was not difficult. To engage participants, advertisement of the study was done through an electronic flyer, and on social networking entities such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter. The researcher hoped to recruit participants using purposive and snowball sampling, where potential participants informed others of the study who wished to take part in the study as well. Additionally, the researcher raffled off three \$20.00 gift cards to the participants. The study had ten individuals who participated. The number of participants was limited due to the time constraints of the study and the time allotted for each interview. The number of participants was based on the desire to keep the size of the study manageable and small so that information could be easily gathered by the researcher.

Data Collection

Data were primarily collected by the researcher, who conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants. Each interview lasted thirty to forty-five minutes and was audio-recorded with the permission of each participant. Face-to-face in-depth open-ended interviews were conducted to collect the data for this research study. The interviews were semi-structured, where an interview guide was used. The researcher asked twelve open-ended questions to encourage participants to share experiences with culture within the Filipino American community. The semi-structured format

allowed the researcher to probe for clarifications or details, when needed. To ensure accurate data collection, the researcher took notes in addition to the audio recording, with the permission of the participants. In order to attain in-depth information, eight to ten interviews were conducted within a two-month period of time. This gave many options of dates and times for each interview to be scheduled. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a private space to ensure privacy for each participant. Both the researcher and the participant had copies of the interview questions, so that the participant could follow along with the questions that were asked. Additionally, before each interview began, a written informed consent was given to all participants stating their rights and responsibilities within the study.

Instrumentation

In order to conduct the study, the researcher developed interview questions to identify participants' perspectives on what culture is and how its practices are used in the everyday lives of Filipino Americans in the United States. The researcher used open-ended questions to facilitate each interview; where appropriate, the researcher probed for more information. The development of the questions was guided by a thorough review of the limited literature as well as the researcher's personal and professional experiences with this population. Additionally, the researcher sought feedback from the thesis chair and a person who meets the eligibility criteria for participation in the study to check the wording of the questions to ensure that they were culturally sensitive. This individual was not included in the study.

Data Analysis

After the researcher finished conducting all the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed in a summary form ensuring that each summary had sufficient direct quotes from each participant. The researcher primarily used Neuman's five-part plan to create and identify themes (Neuman, 2003). The first step of the five-part plan sorts and classifies the data obtained. The researcher organized the data around the interview questions. The second step in Neumann's five-part plan is "open coding" in which the researcher locates themes and assigns labels to categorize the information. The third step is "axial coding," where the researcher makes a second pass through the data, adding new themes, if needed. The fourth step is "selective coding," in which the researcher makes a last pass through the data, looking for individual cases and direct quotes that can illustrate the themes. The last and final step in the five-part plan involves interpreting as well as elaborating on the data. The researcher related all the major findings to the literature, while looking for comparisons and contrasts. Lastly, concepts were organized, and possible explanations for the findings were offered by the researcher.

Protection of Human Subjects

In conducting this study, all data were collected after approval from the university Institutional Review Board. All potential participants were informed of the purpose of the study along with their rights and responsibilities. All participants who agreed to participate in the study were informed that their participation is completely voluntary, and if for any reason they chose to withdraw from the study that there

would be no penalty. For participants who agreed to the terms of the study, a written consent form was provided. The consent form provided detailed information on the method of data collection, the goals of the study, rights and responsibilities of participants, and an estimated timeline of when the study would be conducted and completed.

Additionally, the researcher informed participants about how the information was to be used and protected. The identities of the participants and data collected would be protected from inappropriate disclosure under the law. Written and audio-recorded data were only reviewed by the researcher and were kept under lock and key and in protected computer files when not in use. Upon completion of the study and acceptance of the thesis to the university, data will be kept for six months, after which they will be disposed of. All tapes and recordings will be erased and all notes will be shredded. Also, participants were provided with contact information such as the phone number and email of the researcher and researcher's advisor, if any questions or concerns regarding the study should arise.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify the definition of culture and the key ways through which cultural practices are passed down to the future generations among Filipino Americans. Within this study, generational transmission was defined as the ways and means through which cultural practices have transferred between Filipino or Filipino American elders to the younger generations. The major questions that guided this study are 1) What is the definition of culture to Filipino Americans? 2) What traditions and or practices in the Filipino American culture do the older generations feel are important to pass down to the newer generations? 3) How are traditions and or practices passed down between generations? 4) How have such practices and traditions made an impact on participants' experience of living in the United States as Filipino Americans? The findings of this study are presented in a narrative method with the use of direct quotes and verbatim examples.

Description of the Sample

The sample of participants consisted of ten Northern California residents. Each participant met the criteria of the study that included identifying as a Filipino American, being at least second generation, at least thirty years old, and having resided in the United States for at least ten years. Interviews were conducted in private spaces to provide confidentiality. Interviews with each of the participants were conducted during March 2014. Of the ten participants interviewed for this

research study, five participants were female and five were male. All the participants were raised in the Northern California area, and only six participants disclosed having ever visited the Philippines.

The participants shared both positive and negative experiences of being Filipino Americans living in the United States, specifically California. The first research question focused on the conceptualization of culture and the detailed findings are described below.

Conceptualizations of Culture

All participants defined culture as a combination of various practices and traditions with infinite influences from multiple factors, such as their family, schooling, peers and the overall environment. Specifically, seven participants defined culture as being a way of life or how they did things. For example, one participant stated, “It’s a way of life” while another participant said, “It’s different ways of doing something”. Seven of the ten participants defined culture as one’s ethnic and ancestral background, stating culture comes from “your family’s country of origin”, “the motherland”, “family roots”, “your family’s religion”, and “where you were born”. Others stated that culture was “the practices and traditions that make you unique to others” or “it’s the way you were brought up”. One participant summed up the other participants’ descriptions by stating,

Culture to me means your ethnic background: the origin of your family, especially your family and parents. Culture means to me how you conduct your daily home life among your family. It’s how you practice traditions like birthdays, daily rituals around dinner and when and how you say hello and

goodbye. It involves knowledge of daily things with special events in your life with things like marriages, deaths and births, and major accomplishments like graduations.

During the participants' sharing their definitions of culture, key themes emerged identifying important aspects of what culture is considered to be. These aspects included family, food, religion and language. Common themes participants mentioned were family, food and religion. Seven participants shared about food, and six participants discussed language. All participants mentioned family as a major contributor to their view of culture. Most of the participants identified their parents as the main influence on how their culture was shaped and formed. For example, one participant stated, "I wouldn't know who I would be without my parents", while another participant stated, "I wish my parents would have told me more about being Filipino". Eight of the participants further explained that their parents were the most influential because they were the initial primary support and caregivers for them as children. One participant expressed,

The solidarity of family is a tradition we should keep, and the parties and get-togethers. The feeling of being able to rely on each other is huge in our culture and I don't typically see it in other families. You can have first cousins where distances are wide but when you see them it is just like yesterday.

Similarly, another participant shared,

The Filipino culture is family centered where it's very important, being able to depend on each other. Like, many of us send money home back to the Philippines to help those family members who are still there.

Other participants named their grandparents as being the most influential on their conceptualization of culture because they spent more time with them than with their parents. Six of the participants shared that their grandparents lived with them at

some point in their lives. Thus, participants consider grandparents to be just as influential as their parents in how culture was shaped and influenced. One participant explained, “My grandparents taught me a lot because they watched me while my parents worked”. Two other participants stated that they would see their grandparents daily and learned culture through daily interaction with them. “My children see their grandparents often, where hopefully knowledge from them rubs off and they learn about their heritage,” another participant mentioned. A unique statement by one participant was this: “I want my child to know my parents’ traditions and story of how they struggled to come here and that she is very fortunate to be here because of her grandparents”.

More than half of the participants also expressed that their culture was defined by other family members such as siblings, aunties, uncles, and cousins. One participant shared that he learned about culture through his brother who was four years his senior and watched him after school. Similarly, one more participant discussed a sibling, stating,

I think family is important. Your family watches out for each other. Like me, I watch out for my younger brothers, then we take care of our parents as we get older. I don’t know why, but I think it’s just a thing I was taught and what I just do.

Religion was the second sub-theme to emerge within the conceptualization of culture. All of the participants mentioned some type of religion in defining culture. Eight of the participants mentioned practicing the Catholic faith, while the others mentioned being Christian. Three of the participants identified religion as a part of their culture, saying that religion “encourages self-discipline and builds integrity”,

“maintains cultural values”, and “creates a basis of faith that helps individuals find their identity”. Four of the participants said that they learned about religion by attending private schools that incorporated the Catholic faith into their education. A participant stated, “In Filipino American culture we have novenas every so often. Thus religion is a huge part, especially Catholicism where I have raised my children in the church where they go to private school and learn just as how I did”. Similarly, another participant expressed,

With my kids they are both baptized and both raised Catholic. They go to Sunday school. I want them to be molded the same way I was where I believe it was just a picture of where I came from.

Other participants shared learning about religion by attending services, rituals, or Sunday mass with their families as children. One participant stated a statistic: “90% of the Filipino Americans are Catholic, because of its practices centered around family where God comes first along with family”. “Being Catholic was what I was raised as, so therefore that’s all I know and believe” was expressed by another participant.

The third sub-theme that emerged with regard to what defines culture was food. Seven of the participants discussed food in their interviews when thinking of culture. All those who mentioned food stated that Filipino American food was “good” and “delicious” because it was a combination of Filipino and American food. One participant compared food in the United States to the Philippines stating that “food quality is better in the United States where in the Philippines quantity matters more”. Other participants described food as a way of gathering people together, while

another stated that food helps identify Filipino Americans, saying “Filipino food has a different taste than other foods from different countries”. Other participants shared that food was important in Filipino American culture because it brings their family closer together. For example, a participant shared

My nanay (grandmother) is starting to make a book of recipes but it’s hard because when she cooks, she does it by taste and doesn’t really measure anything. So my sisters and I try to watch as she cooks to approximate measurements. I think this should be passed on because it’s something special that comes from your family and preserves the food.

Additionally, two other participants believed that food expresses culture because it subconsciously shares a story through the variations in certain dishes such as adobo, lumpia, pansit, and preference as to type of rice. “It’s what you serve at birthdays, weddings, baptisms,” one participant reported. “You have to serve pansit or noodles at your birthday; I don’t know why but it’s a must” was a unique statement made by one participant. Two other participants said similar things, stating that pansit is a dish necessary at all celebrations. Another participant reported that “eating rice everyday” was his culture. From all the participant reports, food cohesively emerged as a major aspect of culture bringing family and people together, though there is no exact reason as to how or why it is. For example, one participant shared,

I think we don’t really realize that we have culture but we just live it. Like food: you know, you don’t really notice that your food is different from American people until I went to school and I brought my own adobo and rice while everyone else ate hot dogs and thinking that was different. I was thinking, why doesn’t your mom make you rice?

Lastly, the final sub-theme within defining culture was language. Only two participants reported fluently speaking and understanding Tagalog, the native

language of the Philippines. Four other participants stated that they could understand Tagalog, but only spoke a few words or phrases. One of the participants who fluently spoke Tagalog shared that his fondest memory was “being able to communicate to my cousins when I visited the Philippines. I was able to fit in and not stand out and they understood me”. Six of the participants stated that they believe that Tagalog is being lost in the United States. One participant “fears that if the language completely fades away so will the whole Filipino American culture”. Many of the participants regretted not being able to speak Tagalog or any other dialect of the Filipino culture, but some suggested it was because of the time period they grew up in. Many of the participants who were thirty and older recalled helping their parents learn English but never learning Tagalog, and only hearing it amongst the elders in the home. One participant expressed,

I regret that my parents didn't speak to me in Tagalog. Today you find a lot of Filipino Americans don't really speak it anymore. It's lost it because I think they want their children to fit in and not have any problems. My parents never taught me Tagalog or Ilocano where now it's a disadvantage for me because I meet people who speak it and I can't understand them.

From the participants' responses, it was evident that language is a significant aspect of the culture, although it is not spoken by many of them. Seven of the participants stated that they wished they were taught Tagalog, and one participant stated, “Maybe I would know more about my family and culture if I did”. However, one particular participant shared an experience of feeling lost, saying,

When I was growing up, the school system encouraged my generation's parents to not learn the native language but English only because it would help us assimilate better and not stand out in school. That's why now a lot of

us who are thirty-five and older, who are second generation, are lost with our culture because our parents thought it would help us.

Traditions and Practices Passed Among Generations

The second research question focused on participants identifying their traditions and or practices being Filipino American in the United States and how they are passed among generations. Exploring culture across generations, four key themes emerged as being important that included the family, communication, respect, and education. Family was recognized by all participants as a huge component of culture. It is the only theme that was found as a common answer when defining culture and identifying what are traditions and or practices within the Filipino American population that they would like passed on to future generations.

With regard to culture being passed down to future generations, participants were asked how their culture was shaped. Eight of the participants stated that their family provided the primary guidance as to how they viewed themselves and their environment. One participant recalls observing a pattern of events as she grew older stating, “In my family, we typically do the same things through the years”. About half of the participants agreed, where they stated that they would just follow and repeat the actions and tasks that their family has been doing over the years. One participant shared that knowing culture was just “basic instincts”. Another participant explained,

The basics of being Filipino American are like calling your older sister/brother Kuya or Ate or respecting your elders. By doing so, it is involves you with your family. I don't know why we do it but it works. You just learn as you go.

Seven of the participants, however, acknowledged that they did not know the reasons behind most traditions and or practices, but that the traditions just remained the same, since that is all they knew from their family. “I don’t know if other countries or cultures require people to use specific terms to call family members, but for Filipino American culture it works because it shows we care” mentioned another participant. Three participants stated that the Filipino American cultural traditions and or practices originated from their ancestors. For example, one participant shared, “Practices came and gone when my family moved from the Philippines to the U.S., where certain things were kept to know who you are and what your family values or finds important.” A different participant had a similar view, expressing,

My culture was shaped by my parents who are from a third world country and came here. A lot of their Filipino culture was brought here, like the external things, like their environment, influenced a lot of how I grew up. My parents are very old fashioned and then coming here made life very different and difficult.

Another theme that emerged when participants were asked how they learned about such traditions and or practices was communication. Eight of the participants described learning about their culture through being shown, taught or told by family. Half of the participants stated that the Filipino American culture was instilled through how family members communicated through their interactions with each other. Primarily, participants stated this was done by how they were raised from children to adults. One participant stated, “I don’t know. I guess by being taught or knowing. It comes naturally like riding the bike”. The participant also explained that “the basics of being Filipino American are just there; you don’t know how but it just is”.

Five of the participants reported that they learned the Filipino American culture by hearing stories from their family, friends, peers and community. Three of the participants shared that they had heard stories, primarily at the dinner table or when the family was sharing a meal. One participant recalls,

I remember when I was young and I used to listen to my dad or my mom at the dinner table and that was always important. They would always tell stories of when they were young and how they were raised growing up in the Philippines. I think those are huge impacts: To be able to picture it in your head and re-tell those stories to our children.

Six of the participants stated that their families were involved in Filipino American community organizations that held public dances, festivals and concerts. These participants explained that attending these activities helped them learn about being Filipino American. Three participants recall performing in such events while the others remember attending them. One participant shared, “At first I was forced to learn the cultural dances but as I got more involved I learned the meanings of the dances and how it connected back to Philippines”. The other participant who also was a performer reported, “The dances told stories from different areas of the Philippines where different objects would be used such as fans and candles”.

In addition to stories, four of the participants believe that culture was passed down through pictures. All of these participants believe that showing old pictures can pass on culture, by expressing visually what was important at the time. Two participants stated that through technology, pictures and photos are easily available and can be shared. One participant stated, “When looking at the pictures I am reminded of who I was and can see how much I have changed for the better or

worse”. The other participant suggested, “With new technology we have such as Facebook and Google, an archive needs to be created of the pictures or stories to preserve our culture”.

Furthermore, four participants also shared doing their own independent research about Filipino American culture by purchasing historical books and novels in hopes of gaining more knowledge. Two participants shared that they explored culture in their high school days by doing reports on Filipino leaders such as Jose Rizal and Imelda Marcos. One participant described this:

I learned most history while I attended college. I think of Lapu Lapu where I think of him as a hero where he killed Magellan early in history. I wonder how the Philippines would be if he hadn't. Would we have more of a Spanish influence? Would the Philippines still have existed, if Magellan actually took over? I also think of the Bataan death march and how strong they were in surviving and aiding the U.S in World War II.

Traditions and Practices Which Participants Hoped Would Continue on to Future Generations.

Along with how traditions and practice are passed from one generation to the next, participants were also asked about the specific traditions or values they would want passed down. One major theme that emerged was the idea and importance of respect within the Filipino American family. Eight of the participants believe that respect is a practice that should be continued on in the Filipino American culture. Participants described respect as being kind and courteous through verbal and non-verbal gestures. One participant stated, “You treat others how you want to be treated”.

Seven of the eight responses concerning respect stated that it is shown to one's elders. One participant expressed, “At work, for the older Filipinos, you get

called by your last name, but for me I call them by Tita (auntie) or Tito (uncle) just out of respect because they are my elders”. Similarly, half of the participants who mentioned respect also stated the importance of using English or Tagalog terms when addressing or greeting elders. These participants were evenly split, interchanging English and Tagalog terms when greeting elder individuals. One participant stated feeling indifferent about the terminology, sharing,

My younger cousins call me Kuya (older brother), as a sign of respect. That’s because that’s how my mom’s side taught them. I think it’s a little weird because I don’t do it. I only use the terms Tita (auntie), Tito (uncle), Lola (grandma) and Lolo (grandpa).

Additionally, a tradition that was mentioned by three of the participants was the blessing of the elders. This practice takes the hand of the elder, and then moves it to the top of one’s forehead as a sign of respect. One participant shared, “I don’t know why we bless the elderly like our grandparents, but just been told to do so or it’s disrespectful and will make my grandparents unhappy”. An additional participant suggested,

The practice of respecting your parents and elders is what I hope it continues on to future generations, like in honoring their grandparents. It’s practical because as parents and grandparents we have the experience and it’s important to know that we have kind of walked that walk of life and it may be different but it’s good to learn and hear about.

The last theme that emerged with regard to which traditions and or practices participants hoped to continue on to future generations revolved around obtaining an education. Seven participants expressed how education is valued, encouraged and revered in the Filipino American culture. Seven participants have a college degree, which their parents encouraged them to get. Two of the participants stated that it took

them a significantly longer time than the normal four years to obtain a degree. However, participants prevailed because of the emotional and financial support provided by their family. One participant stated that education is pushed because “it helps develop morals and values that will make you successful”. Similarly another participant shared, “My parents advised me that Filipinos are hard workers; don’t do a hard job but a smart job that uses your skills”. Participants reported that the opportunity of getting an education expanded their ideals, and helped them gain other knowledge, concepts, and theories that were not taught at home. One participant stated, “As a sociology major I sometimes questioned what I thought I knew; in college I was exposed to different people that made me question myself”. One passionate participant described,

I hope they continue to push education in their life, because I saw my parents not go to college and the path that they took. And that they made sure they went to college even later in life and it showed how important it was to them. To this day, I look back and I am like, I have to thank my dad because I could not be where I am if he had not pushed me that last year to finish. And I hope my kids pass that down and see that. Although it’s not cultural, it’s a big part of how we were raised and I what I believe is part of our culture.”

Tradition and Practice Changes for Future Generations

When participants were asked about what practices and traditions they would like passed down, they were also asked about what they would like to see done differently. The major themes that emerged were for future generations to be more expressive with their emotions as parents, flexibility in being able to disagree with elders, and more adapting to Tagalog. The ways that culture was communicated by parents in the older generations were not always the most favored or efficient, as

stated by participants. Four participants suggested that parents in the future alter communication styles and express more affection when teaching their children or family members. One participant recalls,

My parents never hugged me or told me they loved me. I hug my kids every day and I always tell them I love you. There are some things like that, even though I was raised with them, I hope we break and make better.

Another practice that can be completed differently works hand in hand with

the theme of respect, where one participant expressed, “Respect is important but I think it’s ok to have disagreements with elders. It’s ok to disagree, where you don’t have to be rude or argue about it. I think there always has to be some type of respect”.

Another participant shared that respect could be done differently by suggesting

Having open communication and continuing to practice it, by doing it and living it. I think it’s a big thing; my parents always push forward for these traditions -- even though they didn’t make sense to me, they insisted on them. And I think that’s the only way that they continue and strive and live through the generations by just insisting on them if they can.

Lastly, language was identified as another practice that could be done

differently within the Filipino American Culture; six participants shared their desire for Tagalog to be taught to the future generations. Two of the six participants who agreed believe that if newer generations learn the language it would, overall, improve their familial relations and allow them to know more about Filipino culture. One participant said this,

I wish I could speak it. I can definitely understand most of it since I heard it growing up. Though not enough where I can understand and speak back. I think its huge part of identity. Language is crucial. Some of the practices have a lot of traditions and superstitions in the culture and I get them confused because I don’t know meanings of certain terms.

The other participants suggested that learning the language would create an overall stronger connection and understanding of the Filipino side of the Filipino American culture. One participant shared these difficulties by expressing,

I regret that my parents didn't speak to me in Tagalog, like that you find a lot of Filipino Americans don't really speak it anymore or lost it because I think they want their children to fit in and not have any problems. I feel like my parents never taught me Tagalog or Ilocano, where it's a disadvantage for me because I meet people who speak it and I can't understand them.

Summary

This research focused on identifying the definitions of culture to Filipino American individuals. Some of the sub-themes that emerged within the definition of culture included family, food, religion, and language. All of the participants agreed that family is the most influential on their definitions of culture and cultural development. With regard to what traditions they would want passed down, participants shared the value of respect and family, and how it is important that future generations continue to value these aspects of the culture. They also shared that they learned the Filipino culture and traditions through being taught at home and by watching these traditions being practiced by their families, though they were not always sure of the reasoning behind these practices. They also shared that they wished they knew how to speak their native language. Though most of the participants were college educated, only two were advanced in the native Filipino language Tagalog, and others primarily spoke English only. Participants believe that Tagalog should be advocated and passed on to future generations.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the definitions of culture within the Filipino American population. This study also examined cultural transmissions and identified the traditions and or practices passed among Filipino American generations. This qualitative study explored ten second-generation participants' perceptions of culture in the Filipino American population. This chapter discusses the major findings of the study in relation to existing knowledge. This chapter also addresses the implications for social work practice and policy, the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research.

Major Findings

Based on the research questions that guided this study, there were five major findings that emerged from the data. With regard to the first research question on the definition of culture, the major finding showed that the participants defined culture as a combination of components, and most participants related it to their ethnic and ancestral background and environment. Participants shared that the traditions and or practices they have acquired through their life experiences have shaped their idea of culture today.

The second major finding identified the specific traditions and or practices, and how they are passed across generations. Several participants articulated that

culture is passed down primarily through individuals' upbringing within their environment. Most of the participants explained that their understanding of culture was developed through their childhood, by being shown, taught, and told how to engage in specific actions, tasks or events. Hearing stories from their family, friends, peers, and the community was how half of the participants shared that culture was passed on to them.

The third major finding related to what traditions and or practices are important to pass on to future generations and how traditions and or practices are conducted living in the United States. Family was found to be a major aspect of culture. The majority of the participants believe that their family is where culture originates. Members of the family are viewed as essential individuals, who create and guide an individual's upbringing.

The fourth major finding revolved around language. This major finding identified language as an important tradition and or practice to pass on to future generations. It was also seen as a practice that participants wished was done differently. Participants believe that Tagalog, the native language of the Philippines, is being forgotten. Participants hope that the tradition of speaking Tagalog continues, as well as wishing they had known or spoken it themselves. Another tradition that participants identified as being valued in the Filipino American culture was the concept of respect, particularly respect for the older family members. They emphasized that respect should be a practice that is passed across generations.

Findings as they Relate to Existing Knowledge Base

The first major finding looked at the definition of culture, where participants were influenced by a combination of factors that relates to their ethnic and ancestral background, and overall environment. This definition of culture explained how certain traditions and or practices were identified by participants. Most participants stated similar definitions stating, “It’s (culture) a way of life” or “the practices and traditions that make you unique to others”. This major finding was congruent with the general definition of culture explained in the literature as “shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people” (Schriver, 2011, p. 22). Thus, the definition of culture suggests that Filipino Americans have a grasp of what culture means as a universal term used in society. In the same way, some of the participants agreed with a different study by Peterson and Anand (2004), explaining that culture is a process of educating others on how a task or action is conducted.

Sub- themes also emerged exposing family, food, religion and language as factors that make up the Filipino American culture. Family was discussed by participants in various aspects, particularly in terms of how important family is within the Filipino American community and how it is passed on. This correlates with Kataoka-Yashiro, Ceria and Yoder’s (2004) study, which found that Filipino American families depend on nuclear and extended family members. All of the participants mentioned family when asked what or who shaped their culture. Eight of

the participants stated that their parents were their primary influences on their conceptualization of culture because they were their main caregivers as children. Thus, it can be concluded that, in the Filipino American culture, family plays a crucial role in how culture is passed on by how an individual is raised by a family. Findings about family from this study are consistent with Cimmarusti's (1996) findings that conclude that the importance given to family is a primary characteristic in Filipino and Filipino American cultures by being the center of how things function. Most participants shared wanting to know more about their Filipino American family history.

Many participants identified food as important in the Filipino American culture because it brought their family closer together. Additionally, some participants pointed out that, through the foods they ate, they discovered how their culture was different from others. Kataoka-Yashiro, Ceria and Yoder (2004) conclude that eating foods from their cultural heritage is one of the five activities that families do to share culture. Furthermore, religion was mentioned by participants, where most identified being Catholic or Christian. There was no direct literature on religion. Nadal, Escobar, Prado, David, and Haynes (2012), however, conclude that many counselors fail to recognize Filipino American differences regarding religion because Filipino Americans are often clustered and identified as Asian Americans, thereby impacting the relationship with the clients and practice outcomes.

Subsequently, how culture was passed down to future generations was discussed by all the participants with different opinions on how living in the U.S. has

affected their cultural experiences. In the current study, all of the participants reported that culture has been taught to them through being shown or told as a form of sharing knowledge. Participant data also directly agree with the Cheshire (2001) study in regard to cultural knowledge being created through the socialization process. For example, Cheshire's (2001) study concluded that there are eight ways of how culture is passed along in a familial unit, including: listening, telling, watching or observation, showing, exposure, involvement and participation. Participants of this study identified three of the eight, specifically: being shown, taught and told, as ways their traditions and or practices are passed among generations. From this relation, the data also suggest that Filipino American culture changes according to the family's upbringing and overall environment. This finding is supported by the Cheshire (2001) study on American Indian families, which concludes that culture is primarily transmitted by family, where they aid in shaping and guiding individuals through their influence.

Another major finding that participants hope continues on and changes with future generations revolves around language. Most participants identified the desire to learn Tagalog, the native Filipino language. The participants believe that Tagalog is being lost as generations' progress and get older. According to research by Nadal (2011), speaking only English identified Filipino Americans as educated or civilized. Therefore, this is one of the possible reasons for why most Filipino Americans, second generation and older, do not speak or understand Tagalog. For example, one participant explained that her parents followed the encouragement of teachers to

speak only English in order to improve her academic outcome. Similarly, other research by Nadal (2011) states that English is the second national language of Philippines, taught to copy the public school system mimicking standards of grammar and comprehension of the United States. As a result, it can be concluded that, out of fear, Tagalog is not being passed on because Filipino Americans do not want to seem different, uneducated and uncivilized. From this finding, it seems that it is likely that when Filipino Americans were newer to the American culture, they experienced more discrimination or oppression and, therefore, they did not want to exacerbate it by seeming different in terms of their language. Contrarily, seven of the participants wished they had been taught Tagalog when they were younger. This finding suggests that it is likely that Filipino Americans now feel more settled in the United States and, therefore, do not feel as strongly that speaking Tagalog will result in their being discriminated against as a result of the language. David (2010) identifies the Filipino Americans as the second largest Asian population in the United States; this might also contribute to them feeling more accepted and comfortable in the United States. Consequently, this finding suggests that Filipino Americans are realizing that culture, in terms of the native language, is important, and that cultural traditions and practices need to be embraced and maintained.

Respect was another major finding found when identifying valued traditions and or practices which participants hoped would be passed on to future generations. Participants shared that respect is one of the most important traditions and or practices they would like to remain in the Filipino American culture. Eight of the

participants believe that respect is a practice that should be continued on, specifically with respect to the elderly Filipino American population. This finding correlates directly with Nadal's (2011) research which concludes that, within the Filipino American culture, respect is highly regarded especially for the elders in a family or community. Many participants mentioned learning how to show respect through their families by using specific terms to greet or address them. There was no direct literature addressing terms of respect within the Filipino American culture. Nadal's (2011), however, defines "elders" as individuals who have enough experience and knowledge to help influence decision making. As a result of these findings and literature, it seems that elders in the Filipino American community are valued and respected for the experience and wisdom they bring, and are called by appropriate names to demonstrate this respect.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

The findings from this study are important to social work practice because they provide perspective on the Filipino American culture, especially second generation and older populations. Since there is limited research on the Filipino American population, this study will aid the social work community by providing a better understanding of Filipino American culture. Specifically, it will allow social workers to observe how and which traditions and or practices have been passed among generations. Additionally, it also identifies some of the valued and influential traditions and or practices that have remained in the Filipino American culture. From gaining such knowledge, social workers who work directly with the community can

create detailed interventions that fit Filipino American populations. More specifically, it will provide better services to clients by allowing social workers to better understand reasons behind certain traditions, practices and behaviors.

Most importantly, this research suggests family as a major component of Filipino American culture. Due to privacy and confidentiality issues, social workers often overlook family as a resource to aid in assessment and safety plans. This finding suggests that one way to engage Filipino American clients may be through including the immediate and extended family or whomever the client defines as family in the assessment and case plan. It is likely that the individual nature of social work as it is practiced in agencies does not work for Filipino American clients for whom family is an integral part of their lives.

Another implication for social workers is identifying which languages are spoken by the client and by those who live within the home. From identifying the primary language and or dialects which are used in Filipino American homes, social workers can better provide and recommend resources that fit the client, as well as providing a more familiar environment that clients can embrace, one where they relate to and understand resources on various deeper levels.

An additional implication for social work practice revolves around respect. Due to American formalities, most social workers address clients by Mr., Miss, or Mrs. (last name), and they do not ask by what name the client prefers to be addressed. This study suggests that addressing elders using respectful cultural terms will further engage the client by displaying respect. This information is important for

social workers to be aware of in order to not offend or disrespect any client by using greetings that might be considered inappropriate, in the cultural context, to address an individual and or family members. Overall findings of this study are important for social workers by providing a view of what life is like living as a Filipino American in the U.S.

Several participants shared that they wish they knew how to speak the native language. It is unknown whether community-based agencies serving this population are aware of this desire. This researcher will share the findings of this research with the community-based organizations in an effort to promote the offering of Tagalog lessons. There is also the need for a larger discussion on the implications of speaking foreign languages in the US and how that is viewed and interpreted by the larger society. social workers need to raise awareness about the different cultures that are increasingly becoming part of the US mainstream in an effort to address discrimination that occurs because of speaking different languages.

The National Association of Social Workers' (2008) Code of Ethics diversity section promotes social workers being culturally competent and developing an understanding of how to work with various populations. As a result, social workers should work collaboratively, seeking out various resources that better fit Filipino American communities. It is important that social workers collaborate with communities, especially minority communities in order to continue expanding their knowledge and skills related to that population, for example, as stated in this study, Filipino Americans identify with the Catholic religion, which the social work field

tends not to know, so if social workers operated on their assumptions of what they think they know about a community, it would result in alienation versus engagement.

Limitations of the Research

In conducting the study, the researcher was most limited due to time constraints. The researcher incurred difficulties in recruiting participants for a focus group, which was the original design of the study. Therefore, the research design of study was altered to only in-depth interviews with individual participants. Consequently, instead of conducting three one-and-a-half-hour focus groups, ten forty-five minute in-depth interviews were completed.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study's findings provide a foundation to define and identify culture and cultural traditions and or practices in the Filipino American population. Further research needs to be done in observing the role of family, more specifically on how family members affect the family unit and how they have preserved culture. Family emerged as a major influence when participants defined culture and identified how traditions and or practices are passed among the Filipino American population. Therefore, more in-depth, and both qualitative and quantitative, research needs to be conducted, looking at how significant the family is within the Filipino American culture. Additionally, more research needs to be conducted on how to identify the process of how culture is accepted. This study found that culture was passed on to generations in various ways, but did not observe which ways were most and least helpful to the Filipino American population. Thus, further research could explore the

decision-making process of how and which ways traditions and or practices are passed across generations.

This study explored the views of second generation and older Filipino Americans regarding their understanding of culture. Future research can also examine how the newer generations of Filipino Americans view culture and can identify their experiences of practicing Filipino American traditions and cultural practices. This would provide a comparison of different generations of Filipino Americans, and would identify any similarities and differences in their experiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions that will guide this study are:

1. What is the definition of culture to Filipino Americans to second generation and beyond Filipino Americans?
2. What traditions and or practices in the Filipino American culture do older generations feel are more important to pass down to the new and future generations?
3. How are traditions and or practices passed down between generations?
4. How have these traditions and practices made an impact on their experience living in the United States?

Interview Questions

1. What does culture mean to you?
2. How did you come to understand culture this way?
3. Who or what influenced how you think of culture?
4. When you hear the word culture what are some terms that you automatically think of?
5. How do you think your culture was shaped?
6. What are some cultural traditions and or practices that you practice as a Filipino American?
7. How did you learn about such traditions and or practices?
8. What practices and or traditions do you hope continue on to future generations? Why?
9. How do you share or explain these to your children and or the next generation? What helps? Doesn't help?
10. Living in the United States, what events in your life have shaped your culture? What are your most memorable moments that have contributed to your culture development?
11. What traditions and or practices do you hope remain in the Filipino American Culture and why?
12. What would be your advice to other Filipino Americans trying to communicate these traditions and practices to the next generation?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

I, Amanda Bautista, am a Master's student in the Master of Social Work Program at California State University, Stanislaus and am doing a research study for my Master's thesis. You are being requested to participate in a study to help identify key ways through which cultural practices are passed down to future generations. It will examine what practices are used and how the U.S has affected the cultural practices and traditions of the Filipino population over generations. If you decide to volunteer you will participate in a face-to-face interview that will last 45 minutes to an hour.

The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. I will tape the interview with each individual's permission, and take notes to accurately capture your responses. All data collected will be maintained for one year after the completion of the study when all notes and transcripts will be shredded and audio files will be erased. When I report the findings of the study, I will not mention any identifying information, such as your name, or connect your name to your response. All data will be reported in aggregate.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure described above. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study or choose to withdraw at any time, there will be no penalty. You can also choose to not answer any question you do not want to answer. If you agree to participate, please indicate by signing below. If you have any questions about this study please contact me, Amanda Bautista, at 707-688-1311, or my Thesis Chair, Dr. Shradha Tibrewal, at 209-667-3951. If you have any questions about your rights as a human participant, please contact Campus Compliance at 209-667-3784 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu. Thank you for considering participating in this study. Your time and input are appreciated.

Signature: _____ Date: _____